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New "Cominform" Organization in the Offing?

high party circles in Prague were stirred up in January by reports that some form of new supra-national Communist organization will be established before the end of this year, with headquarters probably in Budapest. Its purpose would be to "infuse new spirit" into the Communist movement, and to counter growing nationalist diversity. Polish party boss Gomulka has been pegged to head the organization, mainly because the more "liberal" Czech and Hungarian parties wish to get "rid" of him as party leader in Warsaw. The issue will be discussed at the forthcoming multilateral meeting in Budapest.

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COMMENT: This is another in a long line of reports which began appearing last December, concerning alleged plans to establish such an organization.

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and have hinged on alleged efforts to ease Gomulka gracefully out of his party leadership post.

It is unlikely, however, that Gomulka's position is in real danger or, that even if it were, this would be sufficient reason for the world's Communist parties to agree to create a new organization as a device to ease Poland's domestic problems.

It is possible, nevertheless, that some form of temporary "consultative committee" or "planning commission" will be created at the Budapest meeting to serve as a clearing house prior to the hoped-for world Communist conclave later in the year. Such a body could well become more permanent if the full-dress world meeting is delayed or indefinitely postponed. Even if Gomulka were nominated as titular head of such an organization, this move alone probably would not affect his party position in Poland.

Yugoslav-Bulgarian Feud Continues

Bulgarian claims to Macedonia and parts of Serbia, have "gravely compromised" relations between Belgrade and Sofia, according to an editorial scheduled to appear in the 9 February issue of the Belgrade weekly, Rad.

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COMMENT: Recent references in the Bulgarian press to "Bulgaria irridenta" (including Yugoslav Macedonia), have continued despite official protests from Belgrade and ambassadorial consultations in each capital. The latest and perhaps strongest article on "greater Bulgaria" appeared in the 6 February issue of Sofia's Trud. It referred to the 1878 Treaty of Berlin which separated most of Macedonia from Bulgaria, as "dismembering" the Bulgarian people. The Yugoslav's specifically reject the idea that these articles are merely an outpouring of Bulgarian nationalism in connection with the upcoming 90th anniversary celebration of Bulgarian independence and allude to deeper causes, such as the need to turn popular attention away from internal political and economic conditions.

Yugoslav-Soviet Trade Talks Renewed

Yugoslav-Soviet talks on the 1968 commodity exchanges were renewed in Belgrade on 6 February, according to the Yugoslav press. Despite the talks having been troublesome since they began in early January, the press has commented that a new protocol should be signed after the current round of negotiations and that bilateral trade is expected to increase over last year.

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COMMENT: The talks began in Moscow on 4 January but apparently made no progress and were broken off around the end of the month. However, the Belgrade press has made it appear that the talks are just starting. Although a Soviet official in Belgrade named differences over liquidating Yugoslavia's large ruble balance as the main snag in the negotiations, the actual causes probably are more fundamental than that. There is evidence that Belgrade has become wary of the increasing Soviet presence in the Mediterranean, and that the Soviets have continued their opposition to Yugoslavia's economic and political reform programs. Belgrade's refusal to attend the world communist preparatory meeting in Budapest later this month probably irks Moscow, while some Yugoslavs believe that the USSR is behind the current Bulgarian revival of the Macedonian question. Whether the latter is true or not, the belief is an index of rising Yugoslav suspicion of the Soviets.

Poles, Soviets Force Haiphong AAA Away from their Vessels

The North Vietnamese have agreed to stop the practice of clustering anti-aircraft barges and fireboats around Polish,

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Soviet, and Chinese vessels in Haiphong harbor in order to escape US counterstrikes

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US aircraft are known to have been fired upon from the North Vietnamese craft, as well as from the decks of Chinese vessels in the harbor.

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COMMENT: This is in line with previous reports that small, armed craft moored in the vicinity of foreign vessels in Haiphong have fired at US aircraft. It may also explain reports from US pilots of having been fired on by the General Sikorski, a Polish freighter which, according to OER, has no armament. The Poles are known to have been long concerned over the safety of their vessels in Vietnamese waters.

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Hungarian Cultural Institute Reportedly to be Dissolved

The Hungarian Cultural Institute which administers Hungary's cultural exchange programs is reportedly scheduled to be absorbed by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Culture. This information was reported by Professor Erno Nagy, Hungary's leading aerospace scientist and recent appointee as cultural affairs officer in Paris. Nagy learned of the reorganization during a conversation with party cultural czar, Gyorgy Aczel, who recently returned from a trip to the USSR where he examined a similar change by the Soviets. Nagy said that the Institute has outlived its utility as a post-revolt channel for communication with Western countries and added "even you (the US), our biggest problem, now have normal diplomatic relations. To dissolve the Institute makes sense."

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COMMENT: The breakup in Hungary's cultural apparatus may cause a disruption of the Embassy's personal contacts in the Institute, and some unofficial exchanges may be curtailed. Party conservatives, who already have a formidable amount of influence on cultural relations, may use the reorganization of the Institute to replace friendly officials with more "reliable" hard liners.

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Polish Party Visit to Japan Inconclusive

Politburo member Kliszko's party delegation returned from Japan on 2 February with little indication that it had succeeded in convincing the Japanese party to attend the forthcoming Budapest conference. An official Polish report on the talks said that views were "exchanged" on the international situation, especially Vietnam and the "US provocations against Korea," on the international Communist movement, and on "problems connected with the convocation" of a world conference. The talks were called "useful," and both parties endorsed "international unity of action." There was no mention, however, of agreement on the Budapest or any other conference.

The US Embassy in Warsaw concludes that the Poles were either unsuccessful in attempting to persuade the Japanese to come to Budapest, or the Japanese had not yet made up their minds.

COMMENT:

the Poles made valiant efforts to get a Japanese commitment to attend the Budapest meeting. The Japanese decision, however, appeared to hinge on the resolution of certain differences with the CPSU, which were to be taken up by a Soviet delegation slated to arrive in Tokyo just before Kliszko's departure.

Meanwhile, the Poles appear to be continuing similar efforts with selected other parties. A Polish party delegation headed by candidate politburo member Jaszczuk returned home on 6 February after talks with the Danish Communist Party on 5 February in Copenhagen. There are also rumors in Warsaw that the Poles will meet with the French party before the Budapest conference.

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